Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources

Business Plan 2007-2008

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1 Message from the Minister and the Deputy Minister

We are pleased to present the 2007-2008 Business Plan for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This year's priorities are, in many ways a continuation of last year's projects and work. The plans for both years include key multi-year initiatives that are needed to position the department for the future. Several significant priorities will either establish the basis for further work to be undertaken in subsequent years, or will provide information and direction necessary for the sound management of the province's natural resources and the administration of our Crown lands.

The priorities described in this plan support, either directly or indirectly, government's corporate path and are achievable with the budget allocation provided to the department for the up-coming fiscal year. As always, we do want to emphasize that the high-level priorities listed here are in addition to the many activities which are carried out every year as part of normal on-going operation. These activities include the operation of our provincial parks system and our wildlife park, forest protection-related work, such as fighting forest fires and dealing with infestations of insects and diseases that attack the province's forests, enforcing the natural resources related legislation that is the responsibility of the department, and delivering a range of geoscience, wildlife, forest, and Crown lands related programs and services. Many Nova Scotians are already familiar with these programs and services, and use them directly or benefit from them indirectly.

However, the department is facing a number of challenges. To be successful land and resources managers, we must find the right balance between the economic, social, cultural, and environmental values of our Crown land base and our natural resources. There are high public expectations for sound natural resources management decision-making and we must ensure that decisions are being made based on accurate and relevant scientific and technical information.

A key priority for 2007-2008 is the start of the public consultation phase for the preparation of a natural resources strategy that will have components that cover forests, minerals, parks and outdoor recreation, and biodiversity. A considerable amount of background work has already been done to prepare the department for the strategy development process.

It is our responsibility and intention to provide the direction and support needed for the successful completion of the initiatives the department will be undertaking in 2007-2008. The department will be exploring new and innovative approaches to deliver programs and services to businesses and citizens. We look forward to the year ahead.

original signed by

Honourable David M. Morse
Minister of Natural Resources

Date: March 21, 2007

original signed by

Peter C. Underwood
Deputy Minister of Natural Resources

Date: March 21, 2007

2 Mission

The mission of the Department of Natural Resources is "to build a better future for Nova Scotians through responsible natural resources management."

3 Link to the Corporate Path

The following table provides the linkage between each business plan priority and the corporate path. Many of the priorities fit into the corporate path in several places. More detail is provided on each initiative later in the plan. It should also be noted that many of the department's ongoing, operational level activities directly support the corporate path, especially in the "seizing new economic opportunities" and "building for individuals, families, and communities" categories. Most departmental activities relate to sustainable natural resources management. Our resources generate economic activity and provide social, cultural, recreational, and environmental benefits to residents and to visitors to the province.

The Corporate Path's Direction and Priorities		
Creating Winning Conditions	**Seizing New Economic Opportunities**	**Building for Individual, Families, and Communities**
Globally Competitive Business Climate	**Leader in Information Technology**	**Healthy Active Nova Scotians**
Resource Strategy Development Legislative and Policy Framework Improvements Climate Change Impact Analysis Registry of Mineral and Petroleum Titles Modernization Better Regulation Initiative	Registry of Mineral and Petroleum Titles Modernization	Resource Strategy Development Off-highway Vehicles Action Plan Implementation
Globally Competitive Workforce	**Leader in R&D and Innovation**	**Accessible Services**
Human Resources Framework		Registry of Mineral and Petroleum Titles Modernization
Globally Competitive Connections	**Leader in Clean & Green Economy**	**Safe Communities**
	Social Marketing Initiative Integrated Resource Management Resource Strategy Development Legislative and Policy Framework Improvements Climate Change Impact Analysis Human Resources Framework	Off-highway Vehicles Action Plan Implementation Business Continuity Planning
		Vibrant Communities
		Infrastructure Maintenance and Replacement Plan

4 Planning Context

The department has broad responsibilities relative to the management of forest, mineral, park and wildlife resources and the administration of the province's Crown land. Management in the context used here includes resource conservation, protection and development. In

order to properly manage these resources, the department must recognize and take into account several key factors that significantly affect the province's resource sectors.

4.1 Resource Sustainability

In 1987 the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) reported that economic development often leads to a deterioration, not an improvement, in the quality of people's lives. The Commission also provided the most commonly used description of sustainable development. Sustainable development, according to this definition, is "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Managing our renewable resources and non-renewable resources in a manner that is consistent with this concept of sustainable development is critical. Our natural resources provide significant material and non-material values to Nova Scotians. Natural resources provide a range of economic, social, cultural, recreational, and environmental benefits to Nova Scotians. The resource sector must be managed on a sustainable basis and these values, which can change over time, must be considered and taken into account when decisions are made concerning resource uses. These decisions can have effects for decades so they need to be made based on complete and evidence-based scientific information

4.2 Public Awareness and Understanding of the Resource Sector

A lack of awareness of the extent of the province's foundation industries and how they operate is a concern. Some people believe that the forest and minerals sectors only include wood harvesting and mineral extraction. However, these sectors are much broader than that. These sectors directly support activities related to mineral exploration, forest management services, silviculture, geoscience, surveying and mapping, environmental planning, transportation of raw materials and manufactured products, and manufacturing. The resource sector needs sophisticated machinery and equipment, high technology products, and computers to operate and compete globally. Skilled labour is needed to provide these services.

Resource sector jobs tend to be highly paid and relatively long term, compared to the minimum wage, seasonal positions found in some other sectors. Manufacturing, fabrication, and assembly add value to the natural resources found in the province. Nova Scotia's mineral and forestry industries are among the province's leading industries in their application of advanced technology as companies make investments in technology to minimize costs, increase productivity, and improve environmental performance.

4.3 Shifting Demographics, Public Values, and Land Ownership Patterns

There are strong public expectations and numerous competing demands for the use of our limited public land and the resource base, and how it is managed. There are continuing demands to add to the provincial Crown land base by acquiring properties

with specific characteristics valued by Nova Scotians. There is also a strong interest in our forests and strong views about how they should be managed.

Nova Scotia is the second smallest province, in terms of land mass, and just over a quarter of this land is provincial Crown land. This is also the second lowest proportion of Crown lands of all the provinces and territories, with only Prince Edward Island having a lower proportion. On the other hand, Nova Scotia has the second highest proportion of forested land, trailing only New Brunswick, with approximately 80 percent of the province covered by forests.

Over the last two decades the population has become increasingly concentrated in the central part of the province in Colchester, Halifax, Hants, and Kings counties. In most other counties the population has either declined or has remained stable.

The vitality and success of many rural communities depends on them being able to provide their residents with economic opportunities, access to essential services, and a quality of life that will attract new people and retain those already living there. The predominantly rural nature of the resource sector makes it one of the key sectors for supporting healthy rural communities throughout the province by providing economic activity in areas of the province where alternative opportunities are less readily available.

In addition, the urbanization of the central part of the province has led to demands to limit Crown land resource development and to provide additional park facilities close to the population base. High demands being placed on beach parks in and near the Halifax Regional Municipality have been particularly noticeable in recent years.

The following questions give some idea of the difficulty in determining the actual effects of changing demographics and land ownerships pattern shifts. With approximately three-quarters of the province privately owned, the type of ownership and their preferences will influence future land uses. Will land ownership become concentrated in the hands of corporations or will it be owned by many individuals in small parcels? Will land owners live in rural areas near where the land is located or will owners live in urban areas away from the land they own? Will increasing areas of land be owned by non-residents? Will there be a difference in ownership patterns for coastal vs non-coastal properties?

Will the population of the province continue to concentrate in urban areas or will the population of rural areas eventually stabilize or even start to increase again? Will the total population of the province start to decline or will there be a drastic growth in our provincial population? Will the provincial population become increasingly concentrated in the metro Halifax area? Changes in the rural / urban split, increases or decreases in the total population, and changes in the age distribution of the population may have significant effects on the values Nova Scotians place on our natural resources and on the types of programs and services the public will desire in the future.

4.4 Climate Change and Weather

This department, and the resource sectors it manages, can be profoundly affected by weather events and climatic conditions. If predicted changes in climate parameters materialize, such as average temperatures, precipitation levels, sea level, storm frequency, and storm intensity, the department's operations and its budget requirements could be drastically affected.

A report released on February 2, 2007 by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned that "...warming of the climate system is unequivocal..." and that "...warming and sea level rise would continue for centuries due to the time scales associated with climate processes and feedbacks, even if greenhouse gas concentrations were to be stabilized."

Forest fires, insect infestations, wildlife and forest health, and park attendance are all influenced, both positively and negatively, by weather conditions. Warmer, drier conditions may increase the likelihood of forest fires, but may also result in more people going camping and visiting beaches. Cold, harsh winter conditions may prevent insects that could harm the forests from over-wintering, while warmer, milder conditions could allow insect populations to survive the winter. Ecosystems may also be affected, resulting in changes in wildlife habitat and native species health (both positive and negative impacts) and the possible introduction of exotic pests (non-native wildlife).

More frequent and more intense storms will increase the likelihood of damage to department infrastructure, such as park facilities, trails, and fire towers. These storms, plus prolonged periods of drought, may also negatively affect our forest resources due to blowdown, and reduced growth rates.

4.5 Internal Operations

Since the mid-1990s there has been a deterioration in many of the assets that make up the department's infrastructure. Infrastructure includes our fleet of vehicles, helicopters, buildings, parks facilities, and equipment. It is a continuing challenge to purchase replacement equipment when needed, to maintain existing equipment as required, and to develop new park and trail facilities and maintain existing parks and trails to acceptable standards.

Our staff are also critical for us to be able to deliver our programs and services. The department, like many other employers, will be experiencing a large staff turnover in the next decade as older employees retire. As a result, succession planning will be a significant challenge for the department in the next few years.

4.6 Market Forces and Technological Change

Nova Scotia is part of the global economy and our resource industries cannot escape what is happening nationally and internationally. Although the resource sectors are recognized as foundation industries in Opportunities for Prosperity, A New Economic Growth Strategy, which is the province's economic growth and

development strategy, the continued success of these important sectors is not guaranteed.

The forest industry is impacted by changes in the value of the Canadian dollar, relative to the U.S. dollar. An appreciating Canadian dollar has the effect of making Canadian exports relatively more expensive, which makes it more difficult for local companies to compete internationally. A depreciating Canadian dollar makes it easier for local companies to compete internationally. Although global demand for wood products will not likely decline, trade will be affected by transportation costs, which are themselves affected by the cost of energy. Another concern is that wood fibre can be grown cheaper and faster elsewhere. There is also increased pressure being placed on suppliers of wood products from purchasers of wood products to adopt forest certification systems. These are voluntary, market-based systems that provide end users of forest products with the assurance that the products originated from woodlands being managed on a sustainable basis.

The minerals sector is seeing an increased demand for many commodities as the world economy grows. This has resulted in higher prices for many commodities and increased returns to producers. Exploration activity has been robust in recent years but is cyclical in nature. Factors that will help the province to be an attractive location for mineral exploration and development investment include the existence of a fair and responsive regulatory regime, the availability of up-to-date geoscience information, policies that encourage exploration, and knowledgeable geoscientists.

Increases in energy costs (both electricity and petroleum products) in recent years have resulted in significantly higher costs for companies involved in the forest and minerals sectors and for companies transporting natural resources products. Increases in energy prices may also lead to increased demand for coal and biomass for use as sources of heat and/or electricity.

The implications of technological change are unpredictable. Some changes may lead to increased demand for a particular commodity while other changes may result in a reduction in demand. We do expect, based on the degree of technological changes in the past, that the technology of the future will be a drastic improvement from what is currently available.

5 Strategic Goals

The department has identified four strategic goals that it will be focusing on for the medium term which, within the context of business planning used here, can be viewed as a three to five year time frame.

The department's goals are to:

- increase awareness and understanding of sound natural resources management principles and practices;

- continuously improve departmental strategies for managing natural resources and Crown land;
- improve internal departmental planning processes and management systems; and
- improve the department's work environment and the capacity of staff to deliver departmental programs and services.

6 Core Business Areas

Core business areas are collections of individual programs whose results and outcomes are fundamental to meeting the department's strategic goals and carrying out its mandate. The department can be organized into three core business areas and all activities can be allocated to one of these core business areas. The three core business areas are:

- Natural Resources Management;
- Crown Lands Administration; and
- Infrastructure and Support Services.

Generally speaking, DNR manages natural resources on an integrated basis. This means that the relationships between resource uses and the effects of management practices of one resource on other resources is taken into account when resource management decisions are being made. The department has responsibility for aspects of the management of natural resources on both Crown land and on private land. Individual resources, such as forests, wildlife, minerals, and parks, are all part of the Natural Resources Management core business area which is in keeping with our integrated approach to the management of the natural resources falling in the department's areas of responsibility.

The second core business area, Crown Lands Administration, covers the department's land related activities, which are independent of the resources on the land. Activities related to acquisitions, disposals, and leases are included in this core business area.

The final core business area is Infrastructure and Support Services. This core business area is mainly (but not entirely) made up of the internal activities used to support the first two core business areas, which are externally focused.

The department's website, www.gov.ns.ca/natr, provides an extensive amount of additional information on the department's programs and services.

6.1 Natural Resources Management

Natural Resources Management covers the department's broad responsibilities relative to the development, management, conservation, use, and protection of forest, mineral, park and wildlife resources.

Forestry responsibilities, on both Crown and private lands, include forest management planning and research, developing and implementing strategies that support and contribute to sustainable forests, maintaining the provincial forest

inventory, producing data on the province's forest resources, monitoring primary forest production, and coordinating extension programs and support for industry development.

On private lands, the department leverages expenditures on silvicultural activities by providing a portion of the funding. DNR also provides technical and professional assistance and information, supports the construction of forest access roads, and monitors for compliance with regulatory requirements related to forest harvesting and forest management.

On Crown lands, the department administers the licensing of land for timber and other resource uses. Funding is provided to invest in silviculture in order to work towards forest sustainability, and a network of access roads on Crown lands is maintained. Protection-related responsibilities include the development and delivery of programs designed to protect Nova Scotia forests from fire, insects and disease, and to protect special sites, watercourses, and significant wildlife habitats.

Mineral responsibilities include the implementation of policies and programs dealing with exploration, development, management, and utilization of mineral resources. The department develops and implements strategies to support and promote the mineral resource sector, maintains databases of geoscientific information, tracks mineral production, monitors compliance with regulatory requirements, administers mineral royalties and the provincial mineral rights tenure system, coordinates interdepartmental regulatory reviews of mineral development projects, operates an abandoned mine opening remediation program, and provides professional assistance and advice with respect to our mineral resources and provincial geology.

Geological studies, undertaken to understand and explain the province's geology, help to document the province's mineral endowment and define the potential for new mineral resources. These programs also provide needed information to support sound public policy decisions in areas such as mineral resource development, environmental protection, land use, and public health and safety.

Park responsibilities include the planning, design, development, and operation of over 120 camping and day-use parks, and natural area parks and park reserves, in addition to supporting facilities on Crown lands, various trails and other outdoor recreational opportunities and, through partnerships with community groups, on private lands. Parks and recreation programs and services provide quality recreational experiences to Nova Scotians and visitors to the province, while ensuring environmental, heritage and resource protection.

Wildlife responsibilities include research, development and delivery of programs, policies, and legislation for the management and conservation of the province's wildlife resources and their habitats, including endangered species initiatives. Information on wildlife populations and their habitat is collected in order to obtain the scientific information required for sound decision-making. This also includes the provision of educational and viewing opportunities at the provincial wildlife park in Shubenacadie.

Enforcement responsibilities include the development, coordination and operation of a departmental resource law enforcement and compliance program, which also provides enforcement services to the former Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, the protected areas program within the Department of Environment and Labour (DEL), and the Canadian Wildlife Service. A particular responsibility that has been added is off-highway vehicles related enforcement activities.

6.2 Crown Lands Administration

This core business area covers the department's activities related to the administration of the province's Crown lands. Crown Lands Administration encompasses the acquisition, leasing and disposal of interests in Crown lands, reconciliation and migration of Crown lands, co-ordination of government surveying requirements, carrying out Crown lands boundary line maintenance, maintenance of provincial Crown lands records and the Crown lands Geographic Information System (GIS) cadastral database.

Nova Scotia's land mass is approximately 13 million acres, of which about 3.5 million acres are administered and controlled by DNR as provincial Crown lands (other departments, like Transportation and Public Works and the Department of Environment and Labour, also administer land holdings, such as highways, land with provincial government buildings, and wilderness areas). The department is also responsible for submerged lands along the province's nine thousand kilometres of coastline. Approximately 20 land-related statutes are administered by the department, as well as the provision of land-related services to other departments, such as land administration and designations for DEL, and activities undertaken in partnership with non-government conservation oriented organizations aimed at securing ecologically significant lands.

6.3 Infrastructure and Support Services

Infrastructure responsibilities include the maintenance and replacement of a fleet of hundreds of highway and other specialized vehicles (such as fire trucks, snowmobiles, gators, ATVs, and tractors), as well as the operation and maintenance of a fleet of five helicopters. The road vehicles are heavily used in almost every aspect of the department's program delivery and provide a range of capabilities, from staff transportation to heavy equipment operations. Helicopter uses include forest fire detection and suppression, ground search and rescue, and natural resource research and management. The DNR fleet (particularly helicopters) plays an important role in the province's emergency preparedness planning. Department facilities range from offices and depots, to pole barns, aircraft hangars, fire towers, and laboratories.

Central support services includes human resources (with a focus on implementing initiatives to support the Corporate Human Resources Strategy), information technology, financial, communications, legal, planning, asset management, risk management, information and records management, office administration, library services, and the Office of the Minister and Deputy Minister. As the host department for the Resources Corporate Services Unit, financial, human resources, and

information technology services are provided to the other resource departments, which are the Department of Agriculture, Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Department of Environment and Labour, and the Department of Energy. Several other departments (Finance and the Public Service Commission) and numerous agencies (including Treasury and Policy Board, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Communications Nova Scotia, Conserve Nova Scotia, the Emergency Management Office, the Office of the Auditor General, the Voluntary Planning Board, and the Legislative House of Assembly), also receive certain support services from the Resources Corporate Services Unit. As a result, substantial expenditures reported as part of the department's budget are used to provide services and support to other departments and agencies.

7 Priorities

For 2007-2008, the department will concentrate on a dozen key, high-level strategic priorities that will ultimately lead to some significant changes in how the department operates during the next decade and in how the department carries out its responsibilities.

Several of the priorities are multi-year in nature. Some were started in 2006-07 and were not completed by the end of the year. Others will be started in 2007-08 and may span several fiscal years. However, the specific activities listed below for each priority are expected to be completed during the up-coming year. If the full initiative is not completed by the end of the year, additional activities will be provided in next year's business plan that will cover new work to be undertaken in 2008-2009.

One change in this year's business plan is that performance measures are no longer grouped by core business area and provided in a single table at the end of the plan. Instead, measures are provided for each goal and are presented at the end of the section that lists the priorities for a particular goal. Many of the department's performance measures in earlier business plans were outputs, rather than outcomes, and measures matched up with core business areas, rather than specific goals. The measures provided now are a combination of existing measures and new measures. Many of these measure outcomes instead of outputs, and they directly support the achievement of specific departmental goals. We have also significantly reduced the number of performance measures provided in this year's plan.

For the measures included here, the base year that is used is the most recent year data is available. For those measures that were reported in earlier business plans, historic data is shown for the 2005 calendar year or the 2005-06 fiscal year. Data for the 2006 calendar year and the 2006-07 fiscal year will be reported when the department's 2006-07 accountability report is released.

It should be noted that the following priorities are in addition to the department's many on-going activities that staff carry out on an annual basis, and that take a substantial portion of the department's effort and resources each year.

7.1 Increase Awareness and Understanding of Sound Natural Resources Management Principles and Practices

Natural resource users need to be able to make informed decisions on natural resource use. The department is responsible for providing resource users with direction and guidance on their responsibilities and obligations as resource users in the province. Nova Scotians in general should have an understanding of what encompasses sound natural resources management. The public should be able to trust the department and have confidence that efforts are being made to carry out natural resource management in a sustainable manner, using science-based decisions.

7.1.1 Social Marketing

The department is examining the way it communicates to both its constituents and the general public. Aspects of the communications process under review include: audience awareness/interest in natural resource topics, the perception of department initiatives, audience information requirements, internal communications, as well as existing communications and messaging strategies. The immediate result is expected to be an effective communication strategy that is both proactive and responsive. It will be measured, reviewed and modified as required to satisfy both departmental and public information requirements.

An analysis of a March 2006 public opinion survey was carried out and findings were presented to staff. Staff comments were gathered for additional input into how the department can most effectively communicate. As a result of the survey, a new communications policy has been developed. Initiatives have been launched to solidify the consistency of the department's identity in public forums, such as the use DNR logos on vehicles and clothing, as well as consistent telecommunications identification. The department plans to continue examining its communications efforts in order to be both proactive and responsive to client and public information requirements.

Planned activities for 2007-2008 include:

- conducting (and analyzing findings) of an internal employee survey;
- re-examining communications initiatives, identifying strengths/weaknesses and changes required;
- enhancing communications and media skills of staff members frequently called upon by the media;
- developing a new communications strategy for the department, as well as a method of measuring its effectiveness; and
- developing and launching an updated website on Integrated Resource Management (IRM), which is the planning and decision-making process used to manage Crown lands administered by the department.

Goal Increase Awareness and Understanding of Sound Natural Resources Management Principles and Practices					
Outcome	**Measure**	**Base Year**	**Target 2007-08**	**Ultimate Target**	**Strategic Actions**
Effective and Efficient Service to the Public	Level of Public Satisfaction with Overall Performance of the Department (% rating performance as very good or excellent) [1]	63% (2005-06)	not applicable (no survey planned)	65% (2009-10)	Develop and implement communications strategy Promote consistent department identity Provide customer service and stakeholder engagement training to staff Investigate new relationships with stakeholders
Public Awareness of Crown Land Management	Level of Public Awareness of Process in Place to Manage Crown Land (% that know a process is used) [2]	61% (2005-06)	not applicable (no survey planned)	65% (2009-10)	Develop and implement new website for IRM Promote LRMFs
Knowledgeable Teachers and Youth	Number of teachers, students and community group members receiving natural resources stewardship related training at the Wildlife Park and the Natural Resources Education Centre (thousands) [3]	10.8 (2005-06)	11.7 (2007-08)	18.0 (2009-10)	Provide in-service and professional development work shops for teachers Promote educational programs Work with Ducks Unlimited to provide a wetlands educational experience

1 The 2005-06 results were from a survey of a representative sample of 400 Nova Scotians conducted between mid-February 2006 and mid-March 2006 on behalf of DNR. This is a periodic survey that is not conducted annually, so results are not available for every year. The next survey is expected during 2009-10.

2 See previous footnote.

3 This measure was previously reported as two separate measures. Historic data is provided in DNR's accountability reports, which are available electronically on the DNR website at http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/businessplan/default.htm#account.

7.2 Continuously Improve Departmental Strategies for Managing Natural Resources and Crown Land

The department has broad responsibilities relative to the development, management, conservation and protection of the province's forest, mineral, and wildlife resources, the operation of the provincial parks system, and the administration of the province's Crown land. Numerous acts, regulations, strategies, policies, procedures, and guidelines are in place to provide rules, processes, and guidance for the department when carrying out these responsibilities. It is a continual challenge to develop new strategies and to keep existing strategies up-to-date and relevant.

7.2.1 Integrated Resource Management (IRM)

The department defines Integrated Resource Management, or IRM, to be "a planning and decision-making process that involves the coordination of resource management policies, programs and activities so that long-term sustainable benefits are optimized and conflicts among resource users are minimized." An IRM process is used for Crown lands administered by DNR so that we are able to take into account the relationships between the various resource uses and the effects of management practices of one resource upon others.

Integrated resource management includes two major processes. The initial process inventoried special land features, uses and resource values, and incorporated these into databases, which led to the development of goals and objectives for Crown land. Based on the information identified, the land use planning process recognizes and conserves special land features and uses, optimizes long term sustainable resource values, and minimizes conflicts.

A Long Range Management Framework (LRMF) is an ecologically based land use planning document. Each of the province's 39 ecodistricts will eventually be covered by an LRMF.

Planned activities for 2007-2008 include:

- completing the ecological landscape analysis phase of the LRMF development process for the remainder of the province's 39 ecodistricts (28 of 39 were to be completed in 2006-07 as a commitment in the 2006-07 business plan);
- completing the procedural guide for ecological landscape design; and
- completing the ecological landscape design phase of the LRMF development process for one ecodistrict as a pilot project that will be used to guide subsequent work.

7.2.2 Resource Strategy Development

As part of a multi-year initiative, work is underway on a renewal of the department's forest and mineral strategies, development and implementation of a comprehensive

system strategy and plan for our provincial parks, and preparation of a provincial biodiversity strategy.

The result of this work will be a comprehensive provincial natural resources strategy covering forests, minerals, parks and outdoor recreation, and biodiversity. This strategy will determine the priorities and direction for government actions necessary for the management of the resources covered by the strategy and the programs, services and activities related to their management. The ultimate result will be a policy framework that supports sustainable natural resource management, the conservation of a healthy natural environment, and current and new economic opportunities linked to these resources.

Assuming permission to proceed with public consultations is received, planned activities for 2007-2008 include:

- finalizing and making available discussion guides for use with the forest, minerals, and parks and outdoor recreation strategies;
- holding public consultations and meetings with stakeholders and the aboriginal community to collect input;

In subsequent years, the information collected during consultations will be analyzed, individual components of the strategy drafted, the drafts made available to the public for review and comment, and the strategy finalized and submitted to Executive Council for approval.

7.2.3 Legislative and Policy Framework Improvements

The department has an extensive legislative and policy framework that governs the department's areas of responsibility with respect to forests, minerals, parks, beaches, trails, wildlife, and Crown land. This framework is made up of approximately 30 acts, several hundred regulations, and numerous policies and procedures that are used to manage natural resources in the province and to administer Crown land.

This framework must be comprehensive, relevant, and up-to-date in order to ensure that the department is able to effectively manage the province's natural resources and administer our Crown land.

Planned activities for 2007-2008 include:

- continuing the review of wildlife management areas and game sanctuaries regulations;
- completing the annual review of regulations under the *Wildlife Act*;
- implementing changes to the Forest Sustainability Regulations;
- reviewing and defining the department's role with respect to coastal management and coastal management planning; and

- working with other provincial government departments, the federal government and, in some cases, other provinces to address issues related to:
  - the divestiture of several federally owned harbour beds in Nova Scotia;
  - offshore jurisdiction for the Donkin coal resource; and
  - tidal power development.

7.2.4 Climate Change Impact Analysis

Climate can be viewed as the average weather over an extended period of time for a given geographic location or region. Weather conditions are measured by parameters such as temperature (high, low and average), precipitation, and wind. Climate change can be viewed as a long-term shift in the climate of a specific location.

The impacts of climate change in Nova Scotia could result in changes in many climate and weather variables, including maximum and minimum temperatures, season lengths, levels of precipitation, precipitation intensity, a rise in sea level, and an increase in the number of intense storms.

Planned activities for 2007-2008 include:

- developing material on the potential impacts of climate change on the department's areas of responsibility (forests, minerals, parks and outdoor recreation, wildlife, and Crown lands) for use in the development of the natural resources strategy and to guide the implementation of adaptation measures and resource management decisions in the future; and
- analyzing the potential growth of several commercial tree species under current climate conditions and under future climate conditions that can be expected to exist with global climate change (taking into account factors such as topography, available sunlight, soil and water, growing degree days and soil fertility).

7.2.5 Off-highway Vehicles Action Plan Implementation

The government released its Action Plan for Off-highway Vehicles (OHV) in October 2005. The Action Plan includes measures to improve public safety, prevent damage to the environment, protect private property rights, and steps to be taken to provide increased enforcement with respect to OHV issues.

The department was given the responsibility to lead the Action Plan implementation and oversee an interdepartmental committee with nine departments contributing. Planned activities for 2007-2008 include:

- developing relevant regulations required for 2007-2008;

- working with the Off-highway Vehicles Ministerial Advisory Committee that was established in 2006-2007;

- continuing to establish relevant processes, policies and procedures for implementing key sections of the OHV Action Plan; and

- working on the development of trails available for OHV use that will be part of a provincial trails network.

7.2.6 Registry of Mineral and Petroleum Titles Modernization

The Registry of Mineral and Petroleum Titles manages the province's mineral tenure management systems. Functions of the Registry include granting licences and leases to mineral rights applicants, keeping records of mineral rights disposition in the province, issuing licences, leases, notifications, releases, and other documents related to the province's mineral tenure system and tracking expenditures reported by mineral rights holders.

A significant modernization project needs to be undertaken for the Registry. From application to license, the existing processes are primarily paper-based, supported with desk-top tools, and available to clients only in the registry offices in Halifax. In order to operate efficiently, to comply with the province's move to e-business operations, to properly serve clients, and to be competitive with mineral tenure systems being implemented in other provinces, the registry is being converted to a digital system. A key benefit will be the provision of map-based remote access to the registry.

Planned activities for 2007-2008 include:

- working with the successful proponent of a Request For Proposals, issued in 2006-07 fiscal year, for the design, development, testing, and implementation of an Automated Integrated Mineral and Petroleum Rights Registry where:

    - Phase I consists of the migration of the existing Registry electronic data repository to a modern, stable open database; and

    - Phase II consists of the provision of secure, client self-service online map-based claim staking and online payment capabilities.

- providing information / training for department staff to successfully implement Phase I and Phase II; and

- providing information / training sessions for industry clients to allow them to successfully access and utilize the components added to the system in Phase II.

The modernization of this system is one of one of the department's main initiatives planned under the Better Regulation Initiative, which requires that government reduce the paperwork for business required by provincial departments by 20 percent

over the next four years. The Better Regulation Initiative's goal is to make sure that government's approach to regulation contributes to a prosperous business climate.

Goal Continuously Improve Departmental Strategies for Managing Natural Resources and Crown Land					
Outcome	**Measure**	**Base Year**	**Target 2007-08**	**Ultimate Target**	**Strategic Actions**
Effective Management of Resource Supply	Percentage of required value of silviculture on private and industrial lands completed [4]	127% (2005)	100% (2007)	100% (2010)	Analyze wood supply requirements Administer audit, monitoring and compliance programs Operate the Registry of Wood Buyers
Species Diversity	Percentage of endangered and threatened species with recovery plans in place (as of March 31) [5]	74% (2006)	100% (2008)	100% (2010)	Create Recovery Teams for listed species Provide support and resources for the development of recovery plans
Conservation of Ecosystem Function	Percentage compliance with *Wildlife Habitat and Watercourses Protection Regulations* under the *Forests Act* [6]	29% (2004-05)	90% (2007-08)	90% (2010-11)	Promote requirements of regulations and provide advice and educational material Monitor compliance with regulations

7.3 Improve Internal Departmental Planning Processes and Management Systems

Initiatives that support this goal relate to internal departmental planning and the collection of information needed to make sound decisions for effective operations, for setting future priorities, and for providing high-quality programs and services.

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4 This measure is calculated on a calendar year basis. The latest year data is available is 2005. Data for 2006 will be available when the 2006 Registry of Buyers Annual Report is released (expected to be sometime during June or July 2007). Historic data is provided in DNR's accountability reports, which are available electronically on the DNR website at http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/businessplan/default.htm#account.

5 The *Endangered Species Act* requires that recovery plans must be in place one year after listing for endangered species and two years after listing for threatened species. Historic data is provided in DNR's accountability reports, which are available electronically on the DNR website at http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/businessplan/default.htm#account.

6 This measure is calculated based on the results of monitoring of forest harvesting sites, which does not take place on an annual basis. The next monitoring is planned for 2007-08.

7.3.1 Business Continuity Planning

Business continuity planning is a pro-active planning process used to ensure the continued availability of essential programs, services, operations, and programs, in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. A business continuity plan includes: plans, measures and arrangements to ensure the continuous delivery of critical services and products, which permits the organization to recover its facilities, data and assets; and the identification of necessary resources to support business continuity, including personnel, information, equipment, financial allocations, legal counsel, infrastructure protection and accommodations.

The nature of the department's operations, our human resources, and our physical infrastructure makes it critical to have a comprehensive and up-to-date business continuity plan in place because, in all likelihood, the department will be heavily involved in dealing with the aftermath of most types of disasters that ever do occur.

Planned activities for 2007-2008 include:

- completing and implementing a departmental business continuity plan.

7.3.2 Infrastructure Maintenance and Replacement Planning

The department has under its management an extensive range of infrastructure, including buildings, parks and trails, information technology equipment, vessels, vehicles, and helicopters. Our infrastructure plays an integral role in achieving departmental goals and objectives within our mandated programs. In addition, the infrastructure is essential for providing effective program management and delivery, and for ensuring that safe workplaces and public facilities are available.

Much of this infrastructure is aging and, with finite resources limiting necessary re-investment, many items are being extended beyond their normal serviceable life. To manage the infrastructure into the future and to help to ensure that we have the necessary tools and services available for staff and the public, the department will implement a life cycle management approach for infrastructure that will develop a strategic process to manage re-investment for infrastructure aimed at future sustainability.

Planned activities for 2007-2008 include:

- reviewing and updating our outstanding capital and maintenance projects for facilities.

7.3.3 Better Regulation Initiative

The Better Regulation Initiative is a government-wide initiative that is intended to make Nova Scotia a more business-friendly location through the reduction and avoidance of red tape. Regulations are often needed to protect society, but they must be done in a way that allows businesses to operate effectively. The quality of regulation is increasingly viewed as a key factor that contributes to business success.

Government has committed to a reduction in the paperwork burden for businesses, associated with meeting regulatory requirements, by 20 per cent by the year 2010, while at the same time ensuring that regulations continue to protect the public, the environment, and our communities.

One of the department's initiatives mentioned earlier, the modernization of the Registry of Mineral and Petroleum Titles, is expected to make the Registry much more efficient and save businesses a significant amount of time.

Planned activities for 2007-2008 include:

- identifying further opportunities to reduce the administrative burden faced by businesses when complying with complying with departmental legislation.

7.3.4 French-language Services Plan

Bill 111, the *French-language Services Act*, was proclaimed early December 2004. Regulations have also been developed and these came into effect on December 31, 2006. One requirement of the regulations is the need to develop a French-language services plan, with the first plan required before March 31, 2007.

Planned activities for 2007-2008 include:

- implementing the March 2007 plan to meet the requirements of the French-language Services Regulations; and
- developing the French-language services plan for 2007-2008.

Goal Improve Internal Departmental Planning Processes and Management Systems					
Outcome	**Measure**	**Base Year**	**Target 2007-08**	**Ultimate Target**	**Strategic Actions**
An Effective Organization	Percent of employees that somewhat agree or strongly agree that they work for an effective organization [7]	49% (2004)	not applicable (no survey planned)	51% (2011)	Improve work planning processes and internal communications Increase emphasis on planning and analysis

[7] All permanent civil servants were included in an employee survey conducted by the Public Service Commission in February 2004. Another complete survey is scheduled for March 2007. No target is being set for 2007-08 because the department's planned activities for 2007-08 will be implemented after the next survey occurs. It will take several years before positive results from the activities being undertaken are seen. The ultimate target is being set for 2011 (complete surveys will be conducted in 2009 and 2011).

7.4 Improve the Department's Work Environment and the Capacity of Staff to Deliver Programs and Services

Our staff are critical for delivering the public services provided by this department. Given the large number of staff who are eligible to retire in the next five years, the department must take steps to ensure that we are able to maintain a complement of dedicated public servants with the knowledge and skill sets needed to allow the department to continue to meet our mandate.

7.4.1 Human Resources Framework [8]

In response to the survey of staff within government that took place in 2004, as well as to support the Nova Scotia Corporate Human Resources Plan, a Human Resources Framework was prepared for use in the department (and the other Resources Corporate Services Unit departments and client groups). This was a comprehensive framework that plays a vital role in the achievement of the department's overall strategic goals and objectives. The framework is divided into three sections: recruitment and retention, training and development, and occupational health and safety.

Planned activities for 2007-2008 include:

- developing a staff training plan covering all branches of the department;
- developing a five-year staffing plan covering all branches of the department;
- visiting training institutions to promote the department and for recruitment purposes;
- expanding and implementing a diversity plan covering all branches of the department;
- delivering training on recruitment and retention to staff and managers;
- delivering an orientation program for department staff;
- developing a professional development strategy covering all branches of the department;
- proceeding with the implementation of a healthy workplace initiative in the department; and
- analyzing the results of an internal department-wide audit to assess the state of occupational health and safety compliance within the department, and developing an action plan to improve areas of weakness and to build on areas of strength.

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[8] The initiatives shown in this section cover the department's actions planned for 2007-2008 related to the Corporate Human Resources Strategy.

Goal **Improve the Department's Work Environment and the Capacity of Staff to Deliver Programs and Services**					
Outcome	**Measure**	**Base Year**	**Target 2007-08**	**Ultimate Target**	**Strategic Actions**
Safe Staff and Workplaces	Percent of employees who somewhat agree or strongly agree that the department creates a safe work environment [9]	78% (2004)	not applicable (no survey planned)	80% (2011)	Evaluate results of 2006 internal audit and identify actions to improve the results
Knowledgeable Staff	Percent of employees who somewhat agree or strongly agree that they have access to training opportunities [10]	74% (2004)	not applicable (no survey planned)	77% (2011)	Develop training plans for each branch

8 Budget Context

The following table provides budget information for the department for 2006-2007 and for 2007-2008. Included in the 2007-2008 estimate figure is a $10 million allocation to support Stora Enso's future prosperity. This covers the first payment required as part of a $65 million, seven-year agreement that was reached between Stora Enso and the government in September 2006. In return, the Province will be released from previous contractual obligations to provide land to the company, including a commitment for 80,000 hectares by 2013. Also included is $80 thousand for the Two Rivers Development Association to support the operation of the Two Rivers Wildlife Park.

The Department's tangible capital asset (TCA) allocation for 2006-2007 was considerably higher than usual as a result of a special allocation that allowed the Province to take advantage of opportunities to acquire multiple parcels of land, having significant ecological, cultural, historical, coastal, and/or recreational values, throughout Nova Scotia.

9 See Footnote 7.

10 See Footnote 7.

Department of Natural Resources - Budget Context			
	2006-2007 Estimate	2006-2007 Forecast	2007-2008 Estimate
	$ Thousands	$ Thousands	$ Thousands
Ordinary Revenues	8,681	8,651	8,887
TCA Purchase Requirements	18,900	35,112	1,000
Net Program Expenses:			
• Senior Management	629	628	654
• Corporate Services Unit [11]	7,194	7,173	7,641
• Renewable Resources	10,125	10,016	10,532
• Mineral Resources	3,258	3,172	3,496
• Regional Services	36,758	36,718	47,126
• Planning Secretariat	4,409	4,198	4,454
• Land Services	3,464	3,394	2,999
Total - Net Program Expenses	65,837	65,299	76,902
Provincially Funded Staff (# of FTE)	881.1	854.7	881.1

[11] The Corporate Services Unit figures include the cost of financial, human resources, and information technology services provided to a number of other departments and agencies.